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ABSTRACT

The ways in which the Chinese have used the homophonic nature of their language to express abstractions in concrete terms, especially to express daily wishes, are described. In Chinese, a value is assigned to an object because the pronunciation of the word for the object brings that implied value to the mind of the listener; for instance, vase in Chinese is ping, but ping also means peace--therefore a vase may be chosen by a painter to convey a wish for peace. The small number of available sounds in Chinese requires that similar sounds be used for different characters, affording many opportunities for puns and word play. A pattern has developed in which the most common best wishes are expressed by using rebuses and verbal substitutes. An extension of this pattern is to use visual or physical representations of the substitutes. (MSE)

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VISUAL ARTS AND THE MANDARIN CHINESE LANGUAGE

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This paper is an attempt to look into the ways by which the Chinese have availed themselves of the homophonic nature of their language to express in concrete terms ideas and concepts of abstract entities. When a painter paints an object that is destined to convey certain good wishes, the object in itself may have nothing to do with the best wishes involved. A value is assigned to the object chosen, because the pronunciation of the word for the object brings to the mind of the listener the value implied. For instance, vase in Chinese is ping, but ping also means peace, therefore the vase may be chosen by a painter to indicate peace. Peace is abstract and difficult to paint in concrete terms, but vase is not. Therefore, the painter may substitute vase for peace. What is said about painting applies equally to other forms of visual arts, such as embroidery, carving, engraving, weaving, casting, molding and so forth. Likewise, when a Chinese chooses a present to give on a certain occasion, he or she does not only consider the value and practical use of the article, but also the meaning and significance it may hint at. Thus, for example, peaches are given on birthdays, not only because peaches are sweet and pretty, but foremost because they are emblematic of longevity.

Mandarin Chinese possesses great quantities of homophones in its lexicon. This happens, as it is believed, because of the paucity of different linguistic sounds, which amount to just over four hundred. Necessarily, same or similar sounds must be used to express different objects. Even with the help of the tones, the sounds fall far short of the written characters. Only a few hundred sounds exist for many thousand written characters. It is inevitable, therefore, that the same sounds must be used for many different characters. This is a distinct feature of the Chinese spoken language, which affords easy and abundant opportunities for puns and word plays. This study limits itself to the examination of this phenomenon in the sphere of daily best wishes. It proposes to show the patterns in which the most common best wishes are expressed by using rebuses and verbal substitutes. A rebus is a kind of puzzle consisting of pictures or signs which by the sound of their names suggest words or phrases.

The most common and widely spread wishes among the Chinese folk perhaps are the quartet fu, lu shou, and xi, that is happiness, wealth, longevity and joy. The ubiquitous fu, and its combinations are visibly expressed through its homonyn fu, bat. Both happiness and bat are pronounced fu in Chinese, although the characters differ in their written forms. That's why one sees bats painted, embroidered, carved and engraved in so many articles and places in China. Shuang fu, the double happiness, is represented by two bats, generally spreading their wings in a circle, and the wu fu, the five blessings (old age, wealth, health, love of virtues, and natural death), are indicated by the presence of five bats. The saying fu zai yan qian, happiness near you, right in front of your eyes, is a design that contains bats with coins. Coins are qian, money, in Chinese, and qian also means in front. Coins had holes in their center, which

were for the purpose of stringing. Such holes were called yan, which counted for the yan "eye" in this case. Therefore, bats fluttering around the holed coins could readily signify the felicitous status of fu zai yan qian. Because of this homophonic quality, the bat, a not particularly attractive creature, assumed great importance in the Chinese folk tradition.

The second of the four common good wishes, lu, high salary coming from high rank in imperial China, is better rendered as emolument. It has an identical sound as lu, the deer, and the deer was adopted in arts to indicate this particular blessing. The deer is the mount of the immortals; it is the only animal that can find and feed on the spirit fungus, the ling zhi, a mystic plant that confers immortality. Hence the deer is also associated with longevity and immortality. About shou, the third blessing, no need was felt to seek aid in puns in its external expression, because its visible and easily depictable emblems are almost endless, such as the peach, the pine tree, the plum blossom, the spirit fungus, the gourd, the cicada, the crane, and so forth. Only butterflies and cats have been used to indicate certain advanced age on account of their pronunciation. Butterfly in Chinese is hudie, but die also means an age between seventy and eighty. Likewise, the cat is mao, which written differently refers to the age of an octogenarian and novegenarian. At this point, a citron fruit called fo shou (citrus medical) ought to be mentioned. Fo shou is close enough in sound to fu shou happiness and longevity, and occasionally is taken to denote these two blessings.

Finally the fourth blessing in the quartet, xi, joy, found its embodiment in the bird magpie, which in Chinese is xi que. Magpies in Chinese arts became as popular as the bats. Magpies are embroidered particularly on children's aprons and shoes and on pillow cases and garments of the brides. And the folktale of the cowherd and the weaver, who meet on the seventh day of the seventh month, across a bridge formed by the wings of the magpies is known to all. Xi has had many combinations in its long tradition. Shuang xi, double joy, highly and artistically styled at times, appears usually on wedding invitations. Tong xi, rejoicing together, is suggested by the picture of the wu tong tree, the dryandra cordifolia, and the magpies; and bao xi, to announce good tidings, in its formation took the leopard, bao in Chinese, and the magpies. Xi zai yan qian, joy in front of your eyes, xi shang mei shao, joy shining on one's eyebrows, and hua tian xi di, heaven and earth rejoice, are respectively expressed by means of magpies with holed coins, magpies with plum branches, and magpies with badgers. The function of the holed coins is explained above. In the case of xi shang mei shao, the pun of mei is at play. Mei means both plum and eyebrow. And the badger is huan, homophonous with hua, to be merry. So a badger looking at the sky and a magpie looking down from the air may be suitable for the saying huan tian xi di, heaven and earth rejoice. One sees much resourcefulness and imagination in these sorts of arrangements.

The summum bonum of the Chinese race is known as the san duo, the three abundances, that is, duo fu, much happiness, duo shou, very long life, and duo nan zi, many offspring, especially male issues. We have already discussed how fu and shou are graphically represented. On the bounty of children, we have the conjugal wish of zao li zi, may you bear children soon. This desire is expressed in a rebus of date and chestnut. The date in Chinese is zao, which phonetically also means soon, early, and the chestnut is li zi, which sounds like li zi, to

establish descendants. In this sense, the lotus seed also comes into play. The lotus seed is lian zi, that could be interpreted as lian zi, successive children. One may wish one's friends lian sheng gui zi, to give birth continuously to children who would obtain noble status. This wish is seen in a pictorial combination of the lotus and the cassia flower, as gui in gui hua, the cassia flower, has identical sound as gui, nobility. One may also wish that the children be cong ming ling li, smart, cute and clever. These qualities are unsophisticatedly indicated by cong, the onion, ling, the water caltrop, and lizhi, the litchi fruit, while the virtue ming, bright is consigned to the transparent lily root.

If family is important in Western societies, it is more so in Chinese society. Husband and wife are to be harmonious, loving and caring for each other; they must achieve noble status simultaneously; and they wish to live together to an old age. In short, they must act in unison. Fish, yu, is selected to indicate conjugal happiness, as yu is close in sound to yu, love and desire. The saying fu rong qi gui, may the husband enjoy glory and the wife nobility, is signified by cottonrose hibiscus, the fu rong, which in this case stands for fu rong, may the husband enjoy glory, and the cassia blossom, the gui hua, in which gui is meant for nobility. And to live together to an old age, the saying tong xie dao lao, has a rather prosaic conundrum of a bronze mirror, the tong jing, in which tong, bronze, and tong, together, are found, and a pair of shoes, where the xie, serves for xie, together.

In the traditional Chinese society, success came normally from passing the literary examinations and consequently being promoted to the officialdom, which brought honours, wealth and high rank. Numerous phrases were coined to bring out these wishes, such as lu lian sheng, yi lu rong hua, rong hua fu gui, yu tang fu gui, ma shang feng hou and ping sheng san ji. Let us see how these desiderata were expressed in concrete terms. Lu lian sheng, meaning may you follow the road that leads to continuous promotions, contains in its representation herons, called lu in Chinese, and luxuriant growth of the lotus plants, indicating the concept of lian sheng, continuous promotions, in which the lotus, lian, is homophonic to lian continuous. Yi lu rong hua, glory and prosperity all the way, finds its substitution in the luci bird, that is the cormorant, which contains the pronunciation lu, and the fu rong flower, the cottonrose hibiscus, in which the sound rong glory is found. Rong hua fu gui, may you live in glory, prosperity and honors, is expressed by a rebus composed of the fu rong hua, and the peony, the mu dan hua, which is emblematic of honors. For its parts, yu tang fu gui, in which the wisher desires that his friend may live in jade halls and enjoy wealth and honors, uses the magnolia, the yu lan hua, the cherry apple, the hai tang hua, and the tree peony, known also as the fu gui hua, the flower of wealth and honor. While ma shang feng hou, may you become a marquis at once, took recourse in the picture of a monkey sitting on the horseback, in which on the horseback naturally means ma shang, and the monkey in Chinese is hou, homophone of hou, the marquis, the expression ping sheng san ji, may you be promoted peacefully by three ranks, found similar sounds in the flower vase, ping, the reed mouth organ, the shen, and three halberds, san ji. One cannot help but admire the ingenuity of the Chinese in forming these rebus and conundrums. Although there is a clear preference for images of flora and fauna, their acute and sensitive ears and piercing eyes seem to have penetrated every object before the selections were made. And when the selections were made, they were made with little inhibition.

The common folks have been for ages ravaged by war and poverty. They ardently longed for peace and security, so that they could toil and moil undisturbed. And the simple state of an ju le ye, to live in peace and to work happily, became a much sought idealism, which is rather artlessly signified through the picture of quails and chrysanthemums contemplating falling leaves. In this case, an, peace, comes from the sound anchun, quails, and that of ju to dwell, from ju, chrysanthemum, and le ye, to enjoy one's work or to labor happily, from luo ye, leaves falling. It is to be noted that le ye, to enjoy one's profession, used to be pronounced luo ye. This rebus also reminds us of the idyllic state described by the famous poet Tao Yuan-ming in his essay the Tao Hua Yuan Ji, the Peach Blossom Spring.

Limitation of space does not allow me to cite more examples. I do want to mention, however, that even abstract canons and tenets can be visibly presented. San gang wu chang, for example, that is the three principles regulating the relations between prince and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, and the five basic virtues of ren, yi, li, zhi, xin, generally translated as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness, can be seen in picture of five gentlemen tasting wine drawn from three jars. Here the san gang, three principles and three jars, and the wu chang, five virtues and five people tasting wine fused into one whole.

Suggestions by sounds have played important roles in the traditional life of China. The Chinese frequently avoided or pursued things because of their association by sounds. They gave a flower vase as a present, as mentioned above, because the rare vase called bao ping suggested bao ping to secure peace. They eat a glutinous cake called nian gao at New Year's, because nian gao can be read as nian gao, promotion during the new year. Likewise, on the double nine festival, i.e., the festival celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth month, deng gao, the deng cake is eaten because it is similar in sound as deng gao climbing high. The vegetable fa cai is consumed to bring the eater money and prosperity, that is to say to make him fa cai. In the olden days, on departing, the host used to break a willow twig and gave it to the departing guest to signify that he wished to keep the guest with him longer. Liu the willow is homophonic with liu to keep. On the other hand, people avoided planting mulberry trees too close to their dwellings, on account of the sound sang, which is mulberry and funeral. For similar reasons the chou chun tree, the ailantus, was avoided because the word chou, foul smell, might bring bad luck and evil influence.

It is not my intention to study the influence of the homophony on the daily behavior of the Chinese. I have only wanted to show how the abstract common best wishes were expressed by means of concrete objects in the forms of rebus based on the similarity of verbal sounds. It is hoped that the examples discussed in this paper have given a clear picture of the working of this phenomenon.

福祿壽喜．福蝠．雙福．五福．福在眼前．
錢．祿．鹿．靈芝．壽．蝴蝶．壹．貓．耄．
佛手．福壽．喜．鵲雀．雙喜．同喜．梧桐
樹．報喜．豹．喜在眼前．喜上眉梢．
歡天喜地．雞．獾．三多．多福多壽．多
男子．早立子．棗．栗子．立子．蓮子．聯子．
聯生貴子．桂花貴．聰明伶俐．葱．蓑．
荔枝．明．魚．魚．餘．夫榮妻貴．芙蓉．
夫榮．桂花．同偕到老．銅鏡．銅．同鞋．
偕．路連堂．鷺．連堂．蓮．連．一路榮華．
鸕鷀．路．芙蓉花．榮．榮華富貴．芙蓉
花．牡丹花．玉當富貴．玉蘭花．海棠花．
馬上封侯．馬上．猴．侯．平堂三級．瓶．
笙．三戟．安居樂業．安．鵪鶉．居．菊．
樂業．落葉．樂葉．三綱五常．仁義禮智
信．三細三紅．五常五富．寶瓶保平年
糕．年高．燈糕．登高．發菜發財．柳．留．
棗．喪．臭椿．臭．

TROJANS BEARING GIFTS:
GIFTS AND GIVING IN VIRGIL'S AENEID

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One could nearly as well have entitled this paper "Better to Give Than to Receive," since, as you will see, many of the gifts in the Aeneid that I shall discuss are harmful or ominous for the persons who get them. All are important within the narrative itself as well as for the development of major themes of the poem, especially progress from a painful past to a better future and, connected closely with this, fate.[1]

Significant gifts in Virgil's epic fall into several categories of which I wish to stress four: gifts of Greek origin, those that came from Old Troy, those that Dido gave, and those of divine origin or destination. All four types, though particularly, of course, the last, point to the often sad but always inexorable march of events toward Aeneas' victory, marriage, and kingship in Italy. In addition to these, a number of other gifts offered but refused are also worth our notice here.

First we may consider Greek gifts. The most famous of these, to be sure, is the one that prompts Laocoon's apt yet unheeded racist remark against Greeks et dona ferentis (II, 49)--the Trojan Horse.[2] Several other Greek objects in the poem are not given by, but rather have been taken from, the Trojans' old enemies. These include the shield of Abas that Aeneas dedicates to Apollo at Actium (III, 286-88) and, in return as it were, the armor of Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus, Apollo's victim, that the Trojan hero receives from Helenus, Apollo's prophet (III, 467-69); the corselet that Aeneas has taken as spoil from Demoleos on the field of Troy and bestows as prize for second place in the ship race in Book Five (258-65); and the Cretan arrows and Argive helmet he awards to the foot racers (V,306 and 314). Can it be only accidental that such Greek things disappear from the poem after the Anniversary Games on Sicily? In any case, disappear they do, left in the wake of Aeneas' Trojans in quest of their new and happier home.

On the other hand, objects "rescued from the collapse of Ilium" (I, 647), "relics recovered from burning Troy" (VII, 244), are mentioned through the first three quarters of the Aeneid. In Book One Ascanius (or rather, as it turns out, Amor in his guise) brings as gifts for Dido an elaborate gown that had belonged to Helen (648-52) and a scepter and other jewelry that Priam's eldest daughter Ilione had worn. No good omen in these! We must, however, find a better omen, though not without sadness, in Andromache's gift of a cloak and other finery to Ascanius in memory of his cousin Astyanax; for Aenenas' Trojan son is the true heir of Priam, Hector, and Troy (III, 483-91). Furthermore, the prizes at the Games in the fifth book include family heirlooms from the Old Country. The winner of the ship race receives a cloak depicting the scandalous tale of Uncle Ganymede (250-57), which is, in fact, a nice precedent for the forced removal of the Trojans to Italy; while Acestes, for his pyrotechnic arrow shot, is given a mixing bowl that Anchises owned (also by gift) as his special prize (535-38). Later on a very important exchange of gifts takes place after Aeneas lands in